



HB 2307 Testimony

Chair Greenlick, members of the committee, my name is Teresa Harke and I am the lobbyist for the Oregon Family Council. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

We come here today with concerns about HB 2307. As we understand it the bill seeks to prevent the forced counseling of minors regarding sexuality and gender. Oregon Family Council is committed to protecting religious freedoms and while we understand the purpose behind this bill we are concerned that as written the language is too broad and may have unintended consequences for religious liberties.

I come before you today with questions and concerns I feel need to be answered or addressed in this bill before it can move forward. I ask you to consider these concerns and make the necessary changes to the bill.

1. Keeping in mind that Oregon minors 15 and older can legally make their own medical decisions including such life changing decisions as receiving an abortion, the first question we feel needs to be addressed is whether or not this bill would prevent a minor from seeking therapy on their own accord. Would a counselor or licensed professional face penalties for treating a minor who seeks out their help for unwanted feelings?
2. Under the current broad language of the bill it seems a parent who is a licensed counselor or professional could face sanctions for talking with their own children at home about sexuality and gender identity topics. Furthermore the ambiguous language of the bill seems to restrict any and all work done by a licensed professional in the context of sexuality or gender identity including volunteering at a church, private school, non-profit or youth group.

3. As an organization that works with churches we are concerned as how this bill would affect a licensed counselor who is doing work under the ministry of the church. Would a licensed professional, whether they maintain a private practice or not, be censured under this bill for using that licensed training while working or volunteering as part of a church ministry?
4. Due to the broad language of the bill could a licensed professional who simply says that they disagree with any sexual orientation or gender identity be seen as attempting to change behaviors or expressions? Additionally, would that prohibit a licensed professional at a church service or elsewhere from simply reading a religious text disagreeing with a sexual orientation or gender identity such as Romans 1, in front of minors?
5. In relation to that issue how would this bill affect church counseling programs and ministries in general? Would it restrict them from speaking to youth within their church ministries? Additionally how would this affect a licensed school counselor at a Christian School?
6. How would HB 2307 affect a 501 C3 non-profit counseling program? Would a licensed professional face sanctions for working with a non-profit in a counseling program, a church, or a private school?
7. Lastly, we wonder if there are freedoms or protections for faith-based counseling and psychology programs for religious universities such as George Fox University?

I have submitted my testimony in writing and you will also be receiving a written brief from Alliance Defending Freedom with their first amendment concerns, and I strongly urge you to review these concerns and to consider an amendment that would outline protections for religious liberties.